

Near-inertial Wave Studies using Historical Mooring Records and a High-Resolution General Circulation Model

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ONR Award number N00014-09-1-0399

LONG-TERM GOALS

We are interested in the general problems of internal waves and ocean mixing. Knowledge of these is important for advancing the performance of operational and climate models, as well as for understanding local problems such as pollutant dispersal and biological productivity. Consequently, a long-term goal of the oceanographic community has been to develop a global internal wave prediction system analogous to those already in place for surface waves. Early steps have been accomplished with simulations of internal tide at basin and global scale (Niwa and Hibiya 2001; Simmons et al. 2004; Simmons 2008) and NIWs (Zhai et al. 2007). However, near-inertial waves and mesoscale variability have not been studied carefully in the context of global simulations. This project takes another step toward this larger goal.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the generation mechanisms and subsequent propagation of near-inertial waves in an eddy-resolving global model.
- To validate model predictions with historical and new datasets and determine improvements.

APPROACH

Our approach is to force Simmons' eddy-resolving GOLD numerical model with wind and tides, and to examine the spatial scales and dynamics of near-inertial waves in it. Model output will be compared with historical moorings compiled by Alford.

WORK COMPLETED

The GOLD model has been spun up for 6 years using the Large and Yeager (2004) climatology. This climatology has been tuned to produce plausible air-sea fluxes that repeat annually, but retain realistic storm propagation, taken from a particular year, 1995. After the six-year spin-up, the simulation was continued from January 1, 1995 (with respect to the storms), in two parallel model integrations, one simply continuing the spin-up ("NO-TIDE"), and the other including the eight dominant tidal

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
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1. REPORT DATE 30 SEP 2009	2. REPORT TYPE Annual	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Near-inertial Wave Studies Using Historical Mooring Records And A High-Resolution General Circulation Model					
6. AUTHOR(S) 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER 5b. GRANT NUMBER 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER 5d. PROJECT NUMBER 5e. TASK NUMBER 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER					
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences,903 Koyukuk Drive,Fairbanks,AK,99775			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Code 1 only					
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15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 4	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

constituents (“TIDE”). Both TIDE and NO-TIDE were run for an additional three months, archiving the full three-dimensional model state every two hours, requiring multiple terabytes of data storage. Preliminary analysis and early results are discussed below.

RESULTS

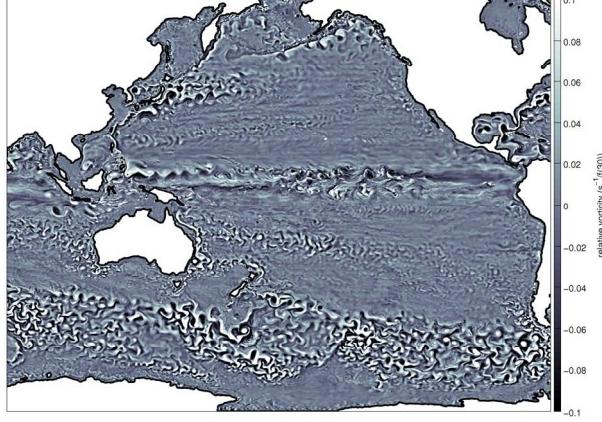


Figure 1. Surface relative vorticity at year six of the simulation.

The model resolves many familiar features of the ocean general circulation-- unstable, highly nonlinear western boundary currents, tropical instability waves, a highly turbulent Antarctic Circumpolar Current, et cetera (Figure 1). We have focused our preliminary analysis on the high-frequency (near-inertial and higher) response. We have computed the rotary spectra of the thermocline-to-surface velocity shear, a proxy for first baroclinic mode. Figure 2 (LHS) shows the latitudinally averaged spectra of clockwise and counter-clockwise velocity shear, revealing the strong near-inertial and internal tide response, suggesting that the model is carrying importance energy sources for internal wave spectrum. It must be stressed however that the model internal wave spectrum is much too blue, with most of the simulated internal wave energy trapped at only a few frequencies, as can be seen from a comparison between the model predicted internal wave spectrum in the Ocean Storms region and from current meter records from that experiment (D’Asaro 1995). (Figure 2, RHS). Notably, the energy in the inertial and semidiurnal tidal frequency bands compare favorably.

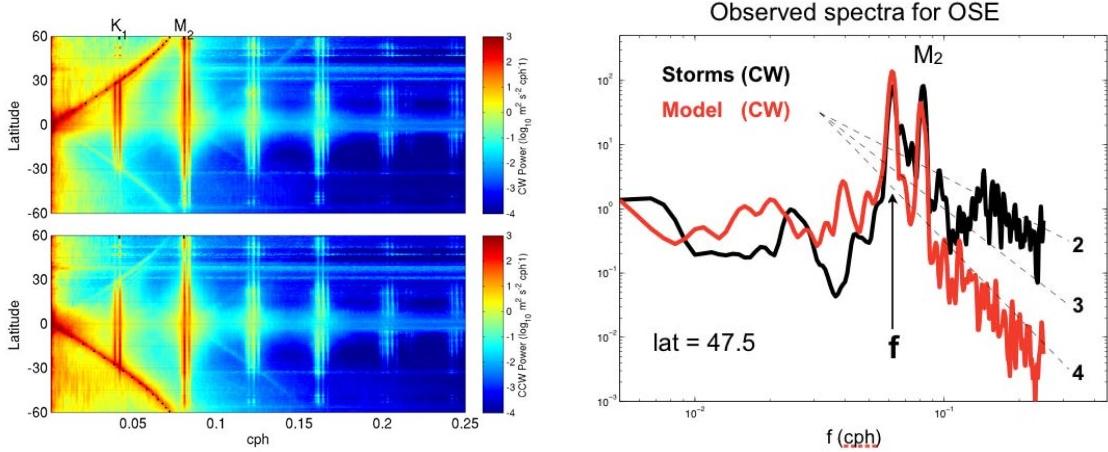


Figure 2. *Left Panel:* Rotary spectra of surface-to-thermocline velocity shear, averaged across each latitude in the Pacific. The diagonal signal originating from the equator, marked by black dots, is the near-inertial response. The K_1 and M_2 tidal frequencies are indicated. *Right panel:* Model versus observed spectra for the Ocean Storms experiment region. Note that Ocean Storms data was gathered in the fall and winter of 1989, whereas our model prediction is for February 1995, so the comparison is qualitative.

Depth-integrated baroclinic energy fluxes have also been calculated for the near-inertial band (Figure 3). The energy fluxes are of order 1 kW/m and are principally directed eastward and equatorward.

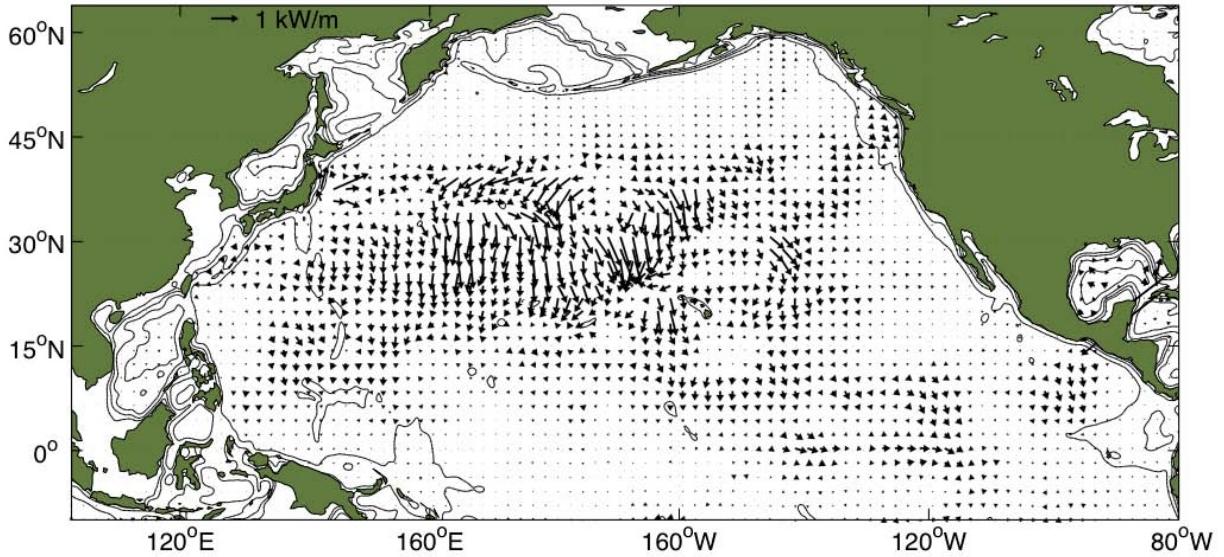


Figure 3. Depth-integrated baroclinic energy fluxes, averaged over the month of February. For clarity, the model data was smoothed over 32 grid points (nominally 4 degrees), and every 16th vector (nominally 2 degrees) is plotted.

IMPACT/APPLICATIONS

TRANSITIONS

RELATED PROJECTS

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PUBLICATIONS

No articles have been published this year on this project.